

wind, scintillating drops of dew falling down to join their brethren on the glistening grass. Air conditioning with the twist of a knob.

This is America!

But luxuries, the majority of which can be purchased by money, do not define what being an American means to me.

Freedom. Yes, there are rules and regulations, a moral code, and systems of punishment for those who infringe and sever them. They are in place to protect the people, however, and are not oppressing as some governments, which implement so many restrictions that the citizens are suffocated by the layers upon layers of laws.

I can keep my lights on through the night, if I so wish. No policies prohibit me from befriending a Jew, a Muslim, or a person of color. And only my own predilections will rule my summer afternoon activities, be it in-line pick-up hockey on the basketball court down the street, or a lazy afternoon perched before my computer, like a dog passing away the hours chewing on rawhide.

Being a United States resident, to me, translates into the simple joy that I can ride my bike to the places that defined my care-free youth, mainly the elementary school's playground. And if I so wish, I'll stray from the paved trail and take the long route, or cut across the grass.

Most importantly, I possess no fear when being out alone. For I feel safe, in this country, that I will not be a victim of hostility based on any outward appearance. And I'd never really noticed how wonderful and rare that is until I spent three weeks on a teen tour with students from 21 different countries.

My best friend became a girl from Hong Kong, and, as we were walking along one overcast afternoon, she stated, "I hate the Beijing government." Then, she added, "If I said that in Hong Kong, in a casual conversation, I might be okay. But if I was in Beijing, I could get shot. That's why I like America, it's free for opinions."

Never experiencing any sort of political oppression, it's difficult for me to grasp what she must feel, or the fear of a simple slip translating into death.

And this country is not perfect.

But as the anthem states, this is "... the land of the free." Sovereignty is a daily part of life. What may have seemed like a burden—all the decisions one must make, and the consequences that can only be blamed on an individual—now seems liberating.

Existing in America means much to me, but the most poignant example is that I can pray, out loud, in Hebrew, with the shades drawn up and the door gaping, invitingly open.

On the trip, while occupying a dorm room, I prayed every morning, just as I do at home. The glaring difference was that the people who passed by my open doorway were not all Jewish. Openly, I expressed my faith and reinforced my beliefs to myself, my dedication to the Hashem.

How far we've traveled, in place, time, and pure progression, since my grandmother hid below ground in Germany, with but one dress, and could not even talk, let alone pray aloud, for fear of SS men. And the advances since my grandfather fought for survival in the same foreign country, with outlandish limitations, are miraculous.

Could, I wonder, either of them imagined a time in which their granddaughter—yes, a family!—could be so audacious as to flaunt her prayer?

It's not the passing of years, though, but the changing of countries that made it possible.

America may never be able to be defined, as being American means so many different

things to millions of unique people. For the country, when drawn, should not be its traditional shape, as seen on a map, but as a 3-D shape, with as many angles as it has citizens, for the people shape America as much as the land.

Being an American means choices, luxuries, decisions, freedoms, and a feeling of not importance, but responsibility, in illustrating the greatness of my country, and endeavoring to uphold the lofty ideals of the founders of this Nation, inhabitants who, like my grandparents, escaped tyranny and a role of inferiority to pull freedom to their chests and keep it there, chained 'til a death that does not come prematurely due to discrimination.

Being an American means I am an individual and have the independence to be just that—an American, because I believe in the country and the opportunity. While it may take a little digging, opportunity is available; even if found, one must clean off the dirt before pursuing it.

I am a living, breathing, original American, and that I can exist unscathed is what being a citizen of this realm is all about. Existing as a member of this free country means, to me, that if in 60 years my family can go from savoring every drop of water to survive to having a house with a mezuzah on each doorway, I can savor the prospects presented by freedom and find a way to take it a step farther.

After all, my door is always open.●

#### TRIBUTE TO MARY KAY ASH

● Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Mary Kay Ash.

On November 22, 2001, America and Texas lost a great person Mary Kay Ash.

Throughout Mary Kay Ash's life, her unswerving devotion to principles and to doing what is right enabled her to exert an influence unique in a society that was known for strict rules of hierarchy, specifically male hierarchy. She flourished where many fail, or simply remain in the shadows of obscurity. By doing so, she blazed the path for many women after her, we have all profited from her success.

Over her career, Mary Kay sacrificed a lot to fulfill her dream, do her duty to her family and her God, and to stand by her principles. It is women and men of that caliber who have made our country great.

Her savvy created an incredible business from a profit point of view, but, most important, she created a business that offers women the chance for personal and professional fulfillment and success. It is no wonder that Mary Kay Cosmetics is considered by Fortune Magazine as one of the top ten best companies for women, indeed, it is also recognized as one of The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America.

But Mary Kay never stopped with work, she did not even start with work. Her priorities were always clear: God first, family second, and career third. It is why, when her husband died from cancer, she put her endless energies to work in that arena as well, creating the Mary Kay Ash Charitable Foundation in 1996. This nonprofit provides funding for research of cancers affect-

ing women, and it has recently expanded its focus to address violence against women.

Since she was a fellow Texan, I was never surprised by her zest for life. E.B. White once wrote, "I arise in the morning torn between a desire to save the world and a desire to savor the world. This makes it hard to plan the day." Not for people like Mary Kay, she knew how to accomplish both.

Mary Kay remembered what was important yet still reached for the stars—and all of us are the better for it. Thank you Mary Kay, I hope you are driving a beautiful pink Cadillac up in heaven.●

#### TRIBUTE TO KAREN NYSTROM MEYER

● Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, Karen Nystrom Meyer was appointed to serve as the Executive Vice President of the Vermont Medical Society (VMS) in 1988. Throughout her tenure in office, Karen's work has been characterized by great integrity, compassion and a strong understanding of the critical role physicians play in improving the quality of life in the Green Mountain State. Many Vermonters shared my sense of loss when Karen Meyer recently announced her resignation in order to accept a new position in the field of higher education.

The fourteen years she led the society were years of great change and accomplishment for the organization. It was Karen's first job as an office assistant in a large internal medicine practice that gave her a real appreciation for the struggles and rewards of practicing medicine. The first woman executive of a State medical society in the country, she completely restructured the governance of the society moving from the traditional House of Delegates representative structure to an annual membership meeting format where each VMS member may participate in making Society policy. While Vermont was the first State to restructure its governance structure in this way, many other State societies have followed Vermont's lead.

During Karen's tenure at VMS, the society was able to achieve many of its policy initiatives at the State and Federal level. These include passing the "Clean Indoor Air Act," supporting lead screening for children, ensuring coverage of clinical trials, increasing access to health care for Vermonters, funding anti-tobacco programs, and developing a strong education program for physicians around end-of-life care.

Karen was also instrumental in helping to establish the Vermont Program for Quality in Health Care (VPQHC). Over the years, VPQHC has achieved national recognition for its important work developing clinical guidelines, reporting on health care quality in Vermont and educating physicians and practitioners. Karen has also demonstrated outstanding leadership and gained national recognition for her